

Kulanu

"all of us"



Helping Lost Jewish Communities

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Jewish Roots in Africa

By George E. Lichtblau

Claims of a historic presence of Jewish communities in certain regions of Africa, notably West and Southern Africa, seem esoteric when first mentioned. This presence goes back not just centuries, but even to biblical times.

Of course in two areas such a communal presence on the African continent remains a firmly acknowledged part of Jewish history and experience (North Africa and Egypt/Ethiopia). A Jewish presence in Egypt and the former Kingdom of Kush are described in the Book of Exodus. Yet even after their exodus from Egypt and their settlement in the land of Israel, the Jewish tribes retained certain nomadic characteristics which are reflected throughout their history.

For example, in the 10th and 9th centuries B.C.E. Kings David and Solomon sought to expand Jewish influence and trade throughout the Mediterranean, including North Africa, Egypt, the Arab Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, as well as Persia. Often such trade promotion and colonizing drives were arranged in cooperation with the Cananites and the neighboring Kingdom of Tyre. These kingdoms often lent their

(cont. on p. 3)



Are these modern-day Tuaregs in Niger, West Africa, descended from Jews?

Mission Prepares Departure to Uganda

As we go to press, participants on Kulanu's study/teaching mission to Uganda are just days away from departure. Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn will lead the group of 15 to visit the Abayudaya Congregation at Mbale, in eastern Uganda.

At a recent pre-trip meeting, Rabbi Cukierkorn commented that it was auspicious that the group was preparing to assist in training new Jews as the world was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Nazi surrender and the end of the Second World War.

The Abayudaya, a group of about 500 indigenous Africans of the Baganda tribe, embraced Judaism in 1919 and have been leading Jewish lives ever since.

The purpose of the trip is twofold. First, it will study the form of practice this congregation has developed in relative isolation over the decades, as it was taught by occasional Jewish travelers who happened to pass through Mbale. It is already known, for example, that the Abayudaya have set familiar Jewish prayers and songs to traditional African beats and melodies.

Second, it will fulfill the congregation's desire to learn more about Judaism. Each member of the mission will be prepared to impart some facet of Jewish religion and culture to the African hosts. Topics range from holiday observances and life cycle events to history, music and Talmud.

Rabbi Cukierkorn summed up the mission: "We will learn from them and try to teach them a little." He noted that this would be the first of many contacts, to "assess what they know and what they don't, and to call world Jewry's attention to their story."

The Kulanu representatives will also deliver educational materials and gifts to the Abayudaya, including children's books on Hebrew language and Jewish history and a student's Torah scroll.

The Kulanu representatives are residents of New York City, Baltimore, Silver Spring, Maryland and Alexandria, Virginia. Participants are Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews and include lawyers, social workers, a physician, students and retirees.

For all their devotion to Jewish practice, the Abayudaya have never been formally converted to Judaism, and this is their most basic desire. Rabbi

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WHAT IS KULANU?

Kulanu ("all of us") is a tax-exempt organization of American Jews of varied backgrounds and practices dedicated to

KULANU BRIEFS

Lichtblau Translates

As a former diplomat and expert on African Jewish history, George Lichtblau is currently translating a history of Jewish-Black relations from biblical times to the present. Written by Maurice Dorès, a professor at Paris University, and originally published in French in 1992, the book is entitled *The Beauty of Ham: The World of the Jews and the World of the Blacks*. (The name Ham refers to Noah's second son, who is considered father of all the Kushim.)

Lichtblau is updating as well as translating the work. He is currently seeking a publisher.

Lichtblau's article on Jewish community roots in Africa appears on page 1 of this newsletter.

Group Support

We are happy to announce that our first group supporter is the Chevrat Tzedakah of Fabragan, Washington, DC. We appreciate this collective's generous contribution and look forward to hearing from other groups, be they synagogues, schools, Hadassah chapters, or havurot.

Speakers Available

Kulanu's speakers' bureau continues to be active. We have a group of knowledgeable people who will speak to public groups about the Lost Tribes and other little-known Jewish communities around the world. Speakers can be heard in a variety of formats -- one-time lecture, discussion, or class. If you are a member of a synagogue, Jewish organization, or non-Jewish organization that might be interested in a speaker, please contact our coordinator, Jonina Duker, 301-530-2361 (afternoons and evenings only).

Supporters, Not Members

Kulanu's articles of incorporation provide that we are not a membership organization. So if you give us money, you can be a supporter, sponsor, patron, or benefactor (see application on page 7). But Kulanu does not have membership requirements or formal members.

Search for Researchers

One of Kulanu's main purposes is to conduct research concerning lost Jewish communities. It is dedicated to finding lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people, including people who might be descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

We have accumulated a considerable amount of evidence that two groups -- the Pathans of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Menashe of India, might well be descended from the Lost Tribes.

We would be most appreciative if interested students would be willing to further research the history of either group. We have some material that would help to get them started, but they would have to conduct the bulk of their research at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. We would hope to be able to structure the project so that students could receive academic credit for their research.

Interested students should contact Prof. Robert Lande at the University of Baltimore Law School (410-837-4538) or the Kulanu office.

Mailing List Help Needed

Kulanu needs someone with a home PC to help with our mailing list. If you might be interested,

Indian Jewess Writes

Billed as the first book written by a Jewish woman from Cochin, *Ruby of Cochin*, by Ruby Daniel and Barbara Johnson, affords a glimpse into the rich culture of the Cochin Jews of India. Published by the Jewish Publication Society, this compilation of legends, songs, and biography is available for \$29.95. Call 1-800-234-3151 to order.

The Media Take Notice

The cover story of a recent issue of *The Jewish Homemaker* features the lost Jews of India. Written by Eli Mandel, it details the story of the Bnei Menashe in northeastern India (Mizoram and Manipur), and also that of the Bnei Ephraim somewhere in southern India (their whereabouts cannot be disclosed for safety reasons).

Next Meeting

The next Kulanu meeting will be held July 16 at 11 AM at the Silver Spring, Maryland, home of Diane and Jack Zeller. Call 301-681-5679 for directions. The meeting is open to all who are interested.

KULANU OFFICERS

<i>President</i>	Jack Zeller
<i>Secretary</i>	Karen Primack
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Indo-Judaic Journal Commences

The Society for Indo-Judaic Studies announces the establishment of an annual academic journal and invites the submission of papers. The journal is "dedicated to analyzing the affinities and interactions between Indic and Judaic civilizations from ancient through contemporary times."

Each issue will feature new scholarly research, republication of pioneering and classical studies in the field, translation of primary documents and of modern scholarship, interreligious and inter-ethnic dialogues, book reviews, and news and notes.

The new scholarly research will delve into such areas as comparative religious studies, historical studies of cultural and commercial links between India and Israel, social scientific studies of Jewish communities in India and Indian communities in Israel, comparative Diaspora studies of Jewish and Indian communities, literature studies, and studies of diplomacy between India and Israel.

Submissions may be addressed to one of the two editors, Nathan Katz, Professor and Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Florida International Univ., DM301A, Miami FL 33199, or Braj Mohan Sinha, Professor and Head, Department of Religious Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 0W0.

Book review editor is Hananya Goodman, 345 Harvard Street, #3C, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Avichail Reports From Israel

I very much hope that everything is going well for you and your families and may God grant eternal blessing in your homes.

My column this season will take the form of a "wish list." It will be very much appreciated if individuals or groups in the United States could help make our dreams come to fruition by contributing to one or more of these worthy efforts:

(1) The sum of \$12,000 is needed to pay the first year's salary (\$1000 per month) for a rabbi appointed by the Chief Rabbi of Israel to go to India to assist in issues of Judaism generally. Of specific interest to Amishav is the likelihood that such a rabbi would travel regularly to Manipur and Mizoram in order to teach and to prepare prospective converts among the Menashe. It is understood that the rabbi would be in India at least two years, but the first year's salary is needed in advance before the program can proceed. An additional \$2000 per month would be needed for other expenses, but these would be obtained by the Chief Rabbi.

(2) We have only 16 copies left of my book *The Tribes of Israel*. We hope to publish a new English edition soon if funds are available (and also an expanded Hebrew edition, especially on the subject of the Caucasus). Kulanu would, of course, be sent copies. (Editor's note: would anyone be interested in helping to update the English edition of Rabbi Avichail's book? If so, please phone Bob Lande at 301-585-5229.)

(3) Our computer is an antiquated model, so we have no possibility for the Internet, nor for many other functions that would facilitate our doing our important work.

All of the members of Amishav in Israel are full of enthusiasm for Kulanu's commitment for the dispersed people of Israel.

Yours in friendship and esteem,
Eliyahu Avichail

Jewish Roots in Africa (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

military backing to these colonizing efforts, which led to the establishment of numerous settlements by Jewish artisans and traders throughout these regions.

But the subsequent scattering of a Jewish presence and influence reaching deep into the African continent is less widely acknowledged.

Pressed under sweeping regional conflicts, Jews settled as traders and warriors in Yemen, the Horn of Africa, Egypt, the Kingdom of Kush and Nubia, North African Punic settlements (Carthage and Velubilis), and areas now covered by Mauritania. More emigrants followed these early Jewish settlers to Northern Africa following the Assyrian conquest of the Israelites in the 8th century B.C.E., and again 200 years later, when Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians, leading to the destruction of the First Temple.

This catastrophic event not only drove many Jews into exile in Babylon, but also led to the establishment of exile communities around the Mediterranean, including North Africa. **Then, with Israel coming under Greek,**

they began to scatter into various newly emerging communities south of the Atlas mountains. Several Jewish nomadic groups also started to come across the Sahara from Nubia and the ancient kingdom of Kush.

The Jewish presence in Africa began to expand significantly in the second and third centuries of the Christian era, extending not only into the Sahara desert, but also reaching down along the West African coast, and possibly also to some Bantu tribes of Southern Africa (where some 40,000 members of the Lemba tribe still claim Jewish roots). **The names of old Jewish communities south of the Atlas mountains, many of which existed well into Renaissance times, can be found in documents in synagogue archives in Cairo.**

In addition, Jewish, Arab and Christian accounts cite the existence of Jewish rulers of certain tribal groups and clans identifying themselves as Jewish scattered throughout Mauritania, Senegal, the Western Sudan, Nigeria, and Ghana. Among notable Arab historians referring to their existence are Ibn Khaldun, who lived in

LETTERS TO KULANU

Manipur Message

Thank you (to Kulanu president Jack Zeller) for your kind and encouraging letter. As a matter of fact your expressed sentimental brotherly love has not only knitted us much closer but is soothing relief for we the Jewish community of the Menashe Tribe in the North East India. My tears rolled down when I finished reading it, realizing that we are not only not forgotten but loved by our Jewish brethren living across the ocean and separated for generations. Blessed be the Almighty Hashem. I'll publish your sweet letter in the next issue of our newsletter.

I'll surely let you know as and when restrictions are lifted for foreigners to visit Mizoram and Manipur. At the moment foreigners, if in a group of four or above, are allowed to visit Aizawl, capital of Mizoram, and Imphal, capital of Manipur, for five days at a stretch.

T. Hangshing

Sadar Hills, Manipur

Editor's note: If you might be interested in visiting these two capitals as part of a Kulanu group, please contact Jack Zeller at 301-681-5679.

Mizoram Message

Thank you! We are very grateful to Kulanu and the rabbi who donated these books, which we received safely. They are very beneficial to many people in our community.

*Gideon Rei, Chazan
United Benei Menashe
Mizoram, India*

Editor's comment: Kulanu's Rich Kruger had sent to the community a carton of prayer books and Bibles donated by Rabbi Seymour Zahn of W. Hartford, Connecticut.

Hotline for Conversion Info

I am writing to let you know that the Rabbinical Assembly, the

announced the establishment of a new national hotline to provide free advice, information, and literature on the Conservative movement's programs for people who wish to convert to Judaism.

The toll-free hotline telephone number is 1-800-ASK N LEARN (1-800-275-6532).

The RA has received a small Gateways grant from the Jewish Theological Seminary to get this off the ground. I would very much like to show grassroots support for this project. Those interested in making a donation may send checks, made out to "Rabbi's Fund, Agudath Israel," to me at 4 Mystic Way, Stony Brook, NY 11790.

Larry Epstein

newsletter. I have a problem with the newsletter.

Littered throughout the publication, is the word Marrano, and while out of ignorance, or an occasional thick skin, some Sephardics may refer to themselves as such, I feel strongly that this is a verbal slight which needs to be righted.

As you are perhaps aware, in early 16th century Spain, Jews who outwardly converted to Catholicism were referred to as Marranos by Jews who had left and kept the faith. Later that century, as sincere and insincere converts began to gain increased power and responsibility in Spain, did the sincerity of these "New Christians" become suspect by the



Although they have only attracted international notice recently, the Bnei Menashe are not a 1990's phenomenon, as this photo, taken in 1972 in northeastern India, illustrates. Does anyone out there know the identity and current whereabouts of these individuals?

That Word "Marrano"

Via the Internet, I recently received information about your organization, and in fact, the next

"Old Christians" in the society. At that point, these insincere converts, Crypto Jews or Anusim, became referred to as Marranos by the Old Christians who were increasingly concerned about the

LETTERS (CONT.)

Several of the descendants of these Anusim left Spain to settle in Northern Mexico in 1581 and eventually made their way further northward to what is now New Mexico and Texas.

Out of deference and respect to their sensitivities, I have pledged to help teach American Jews whenever encountered that these tender souls are offended when referred to by this derogatory term (intended or unintended).

Bennett Greenspan
Bellaire, Texas

Editor's comment: Perhaps it goes without saying, but Kulanu would never intentionally call people by a name that is offensive to them. The real question is -- have we unintentionally used an offensive name?

Since I had similar sensitivities to yours, I had previously used the term "Converso", but after getting involved in Kulanu and meeting many Spanish and Portuguese speakers, I soon learned that this usage is ambiguous since the translation is simply "convert," which could refer to 15th century Spanish Jews who became good Catholics (i.e., NOT secret practitioners of Judaism) or even modern converts from one nonspecific religion to another.

The newsletter took up use of the term Marrano when it published articles containing the term written by two of Kulanu's most learned supporters -- Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn, a Brazilian who studied Brazilian "Marrano" communities in northeastern Brazil for his Masters thesis, and Joe Hantman, Kulanu's archivist, who teaches numerous courses on dispersed Jewish communities. Also, we wrote about, and published letters from, members of Brazil's ARIM -- Associação Religiosa Israelita Marrana. In addition, Helio Cordeiro, our prominent speaker last fall, founded the Society for the Study of Marranismo in Brazil, and published a book, with Kulanu's help, called *Os Marranos e a Diáspora Sefardita* (The Marranos and the Sephardic Diaspora).

I consulted our two experts, and I certainly learned a lot!

According to Rabbi Cukierkorn, the forced conversions were more a Portuguese than a Spanish phenomenon, and the source of the word Marrano is the old Portuguese verb "marrar" meaning "to force." In old Portuguese, "marrano" means "forced one." If one looks up the meaning of "anus" (Hebrew for "forced one") in one's Hebrew-Portuguese dictionary, one will find "marrano."

Coming at the issue from a different angle, Joe Hantman points out that whatever the origin of the word, historians, including the eminent Cecil Roth, commonly use the term. And if it is indeed a pejorative, (Cecil Roth claims that the word "marrano" is a medieval Spanish term meaning "'swine") it has become a term of honor over the years to refer to those forced converts who retained to some degree the secret practice of Judaism. Hantman also notes that Persian Jews in Mashad who were forced to convert to Islam in 1835 but who continued to practice Judaism in secret, refer to themselves as "Persian Marranos," and that is how historians refer to them, too.

Thank you for opening up a dialogue. Readers are encouraged to comment.

K.P.

Peruvians Need Religious Items

I am actively seeking religious items for three Orthodox congregations of Inca Indian converts to Judaism, numbering about 250 adults and children, in Peru. You may recall that 380 of the converts I trained emigrated to Israel. Those who stayed in Peru are in desperate need of **talesim**, **tfillin**, and **Spanish-Hebrew prayer books**. I would also welcome donations of **religious-charm necklaces** for the women.

Donated items may be sent to me at 32 Blauvelt Road, Monsey.

purchase needed items will also be most welcome!

In addition, I would like to arrange for penpals for some of the congregants. Correspondents must be able to write in Spanish.

Rabbi Myron Zuber

Editor's note: Rabbi Zuber's two-part article on converting Inca Indians in Peru appeared in the last two issues of this newsletter.

Attention: Computer People!

Those of you who have access to the World Wide Web, either through a direct Internet connection (called SLIP or PPP), Compuserve, America OnLine or Prodigy, are in for a special treat. By consulting the posting "The Abayudaya Jews of Uganda" you can read about them and hear their wonderful renditions of "Hiney Ma Tov" or Leha Dodi" and you can see pictures of them as well.

The Universal Resource Locator (URL), the Web address: **"http://www.intac.com:80/PubService/uganda"**.

Joe Davidson
jhd@radix.net

Uganda Mission (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 1)

Cukierkorn hopes to plan a course of study that, over a year or two, might lead to conversion. The visitors will brief the congregation on the various forms Judaism takes across the globe and explain the options for conversion to the various denominations of Judaism.

Rabbi Cukierkorn seeks the participation of other rabbis of any "denomination" interested in assisting the Abayudaya in any capacity. He can be reached at 703-370-5191.

JEWISH ROOTS in AFRICA (CONT.)

(cont. from p. 3)

traveler Leon Africanus, a Moslem from Spain who was raised by a Jewish woman working in his family's household, who is said to have taught him Hebrew and emigrated with the family to Morocco in 1492. Leon Africanus later converted to Catholicism but remained interested in Jewish communities he encountered throughout his travels in West Africa.

Some evidence can also be derived from surviving tribal traditions of some African ethnic groups, including links to biblical ancestors, names of localities, and ceremonies with affinities to Jewish ritual practices.

Moreover, the writings of several modern West African historians and two personal anecdotes indicate that the memories of an influential Jewish historical past in West Africa continue to survive.

I still remember from my assignments in the 1960's as a Foreign Service Officer an encounter with Mr. Bubù Hama, then president of the National Assembly in Niger and a prolific writer on African history. He told me that the Tuaregs had a Jewish queen in early medieval times, and that some Jewish Tuareg clans had preserved their adherence to that faith, in defiance of both Islamic and Christian missionary pressure, until the 18th century. In several of his books Hama even cites some genealogies of Jewish rulers of the Tuareg and Hausa kingdoms.

A related story about surviving memories of Jewish roots in West Africa was told to me around 1976 by former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres. He had just returned from a meeting of the Socialist International, during which he had met with then president Leopold Senghor of Senegal. In the course of their discussion about the possibility of normalizing Senegalese-Israeli relations, Senghor had told him that he too had Jewish ancestors. At that time we both smiled somewhat incredulously. Yet, indeed, there are a number of historical records of small Jewish kingdoms and tribal groups known as Beni Israel that were part of the Wolof and Mandinge communities. These existed in Senegal from the early Middle Ages up to the 18th century, when they were forced to convert to Islam. Some of these claimed to be descendants of the tribe of Dan, the traditional tribe of Jewish gold and metal artisans, who are also said to have built the "Golden Calf".

Jewish presence is said to have been introduced into Senegal, Mauritania and numerous other West African countries south of the Sahara in part through the migration of Jewish Berber groups and later through some exiles who had been expelled from Spain, had first settled in North Africa, and had then crossed the Atlas mountains. Other even earlier arrivals are said to have come from Cyrenaica (now part of Libya, Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia), having crossed the Sahara to West Africa and eventually also moved further south.

In addition to the Jewish tribal groups in Senegal who claim to be descendants of the tribe of Dan, the Ethiopian Jews also trace their ancestry to the tribe of Dan. Some of these transmigrants established communities in such still renowned places as Gao, Timbuktu (where UNESCO still maintains notable

Bamako, Agadez, Kano and Ibadan. **A notable number of Berber and African nomad tribal groups joined up with the Jewish communal groups trying to resist aggressive Arab Islamic efforts or as bulwark against Christian proselytizing, sometimes going so far as to convert to Judaism.** Notable among these were some Tuareg, Peul and Ibadiya groups.

Another source at the root of this Jewish presence and influence was the spreading gold trade emanating from Persia, with Jews becoming involved as important intermediary traders. These traders came to rely on contacts with scattered Jewish communities they encountered in their West African travels in search for gold, a trade widely prohibited to Muslims as usurious under Islamic law. **Thus, for instance, various historical accounts claim that Jewish travelers from Persia had organized exchanges of Chinese silk for gold in the Kingdom of Ghana; the Ashanti needed the silk for weaving Kente cloth. To this day it is said that the Ashanti words for numbers relate to those in Parsi, the language of Persia. Under the impact of this Jewish influence a number of ruling families in Ghana converted to Judaism, and for nearly 200 years the Kingdom of Ghana, which extended at that time far north into western Sudan, was ruled by Jewish kings.**

Because of their skills, abilities, and multilingual knowledge, Jews became important intermediaries in regional trade relations and as artisans grouping together as craft guilds. They are said to have formed the roots of a powerful craft tradition among the still-renowned Senegalese goldsmiths, jewelers and other metal artisans. **The name of an old Senegalese province called "Juddala" is said to attest to the notable impact Jews made in this part of the world.**

Jewish presence is also confirmed by numerous surviving accounts of Portuguese and other European visitors in the 14th and 15th centuries, as well as North African and Arab historical records. Gradually most of these communities disappeared. Since they existed largely in isolation, there was a good deal of intermarriage which for a while reinforced their influence and expansion. As a result they were increasingly viewed as a threat by Muslim rulers, and most of the Jewish communities and nomad groups south of the Atlas mountains were either forced to convert to Islam or massacred; the remainder fled to North Africa, Egypt or the Sudan, and a few also to Cameroon and Southern Africa.

Reviewing the various Jewish and non-Jewish sources on the origins of these Jewish communities involves complicated and at times seemingly contradictory stories about tribal and religious wars and resultant alliances and transformations. These originated with the Roman and Byzantine persecutions of Jews and the promotion of Christianity beginning under the emperors Diocletian and Constantine. There was also a wave of Jewish proselytizing and conversions of nations and tribal groups to Judaism. **For instance, the people of Yemen converted to Judaism in the fifth century under King Du Nuqa, as did a major**

Crypto-Judaic Conferences Announced

The public is invited to attend the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies fifth annual conference, to be held November 5-7, 1995, at the Aztec Inn in Tucson. Special guests include Elias Nunes of Belmonte and Luis Vasco of Tomar.

For information about the agenda and speakers, write or call Rabbi Joshua Stampfer, 2900 S.W. Peaceful Lane, Portland, Oregon, 97207 (503-246-8831 or 503-244-3818). For registration, write to Gloria Trujillo, 200 Avenida Cesar Chavez, Monterrey Park, CA 91754.

The conference fee of \$100 includes two dinners and one lunch. A special hotel rate of \$65 per double room or \$55 per single is available. Participants are directed to make their hotel reservations by calling 1-800-227-6086.

The official travel agent for the conference is Pedroza Travel, 1-800-237-1597.

The conference is being coordinated with the conference of the Latin American Jewish Studies in Mexico City, November 11-14, 1995. For registration forms to the LAJS conference, please write to 2104 Georgetown Blvd., Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

All registrants to the conference in Tucson will receive information on a special tour being arranged in Mexico for November 8-11.

Festival Volunteers Needed

Kulanu staffed a table at the Howard County (Maryland) Jewish festival on May 7. This effort was organized by Joan Barch, and a large number of Kulanu volunteers participated by handing out literature and answering questions.

The table featured an attractive, eye-catching exhibit of photos of the Bnei Menashe and a marvelous map of the world highlighting the location of lost and evolving Jewish communities. The table was decorated with a wonderful Kulanu banner prepared by Camellia Blackwell. Our thanks to all these volunteers for a most successful event.

Kulanu would love to have tables at many more Jewish events. This is an excellent way to inform the Jewish community about our work. If you would be willing to help coordinate this activity for Kulanu, or to help for an hour or more at a specific event, please call Jack Zeller at 301-681-5679 or Bob Lande at 301-585-5229.

If you are willing to try to organize such an event in your area and are wondering about the logistics, how to get literature, etc., Jack or Bob would be delighted to talk with you.

A Growth Spurt -- Can It Continue?

Kulanu is indeed a shoestring organization. If you have any doubts, you may be interested in the organization's financial statement for last year. From the date it was formed, May 9, 1994, to the end of 1994, Kulanu received about \$8000 in income, all donated by individuals.

Approximate expenditures for 1994 included \$4000 to provide transportation for Menashe immigrants to Israel, \$1000 to publish Helio Cordeiro's book introducing Brazilian Marranos to Judaism, \$800 to print and mail this newsletter, \$400 for phone calls and sending religious items to Mexican havurot, \$200 for the purchase of prayer books for Mexican havurot, \$200 to purchase literature for distribution, \$140 for office and meeting expenses, \$75 to ship religious books to India, and \$40 for phone calls to Brazil.

We feel we are seeing the beginning of a growth spurt in 1995. In March and April we have received 49 contributions from individuals and families and one from an institution, the Fabangan tzedakah collective. To all of you -- thank you! We hope to hear from many more of you soon.

Keep in mind that all work is done by unpaid volunteers!

SUPPORTER APPLICATION

☐ I/We would like to become a Supporter of KULANU, 1211 Ballard St., Silver Spring, MD 20910

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone(s): () _____ day () _____ evening _____

Interests and affiliations useful to Kulanu's work _____

Jewish Roots in Africa (Cont.)

(cont. from p. 6)

seventh century. These were followed by additional forced conversions of Jewish communities to Christianity and later to Islam, but with some Jewish consciousness and traditions surviving.

These conflicting references to biblical sources by Jewish, Muslim, Berber and Christian sources survive not only to legitimize their respective spiritual claims but also as indicators of their transitions through a common past.

There has been a historical Jewish ambivalence about legitimizing mass conversions to Judaism and to look askance at those who do not "look Jewish". In part such attitudes are reinforced by the fact that certain Jewish communities, for historical reasons or due to prolonged isolation, had evolved ritual and ceremonial standards linked to older sources and traditions, thus becoming somewhat differentiated from those authorized by the dominant rabbinical authorities. These differences may involve such questions as acceptance of talmudic interpretation. This had placed into question at times even the authority of so prominent a Jewish sage as Moses Maimonides.

Even before Maimonides these issues had led to the by now virtually forgotten split by the Karaites, who rejected the Talmud as divine law as well as the hierarchical authority of the rabbinate. Yet, despite their current obscurity, the Karaites played a significant historical role in the expansion of Judaism and also as advocates of a greater religious role for women. Karaite influence extended to Judeo-Berber communities and West African tribal communities such as the Malinke, Peul, Foulani, Mossi, Fanti, Songhay, Yoruba and Hausa.

New Readings Introduced

During March, Kulanu introduced a new reading for the Passover seder, honoring the return of the lost tribe of Menashe. The reading explains the history of the tribe and reproduces a traditional Bnei Menashe poem about the Red Sea crossing as well as an original reading by Jonina Duker.

The ritual was added at seders throughout the United States.

The new reading was publicized through press releases and a Kulanu mailing. If you did not hear about it in time and want to get a head start on next year's seder, please contact the Kulanu office.

Meanwhile, in a separate appeal by the Washington Association for Ethiopian Jews for letters of friendship to be read at a community seder in Ethiopia, the following poem by 13-year-old Jennie Marx, of Congregation Or Chadash in Germantown, Maryland, was received. We reprint it now because we think it expresses the philosophy of Kulanu, not just at seder time, but at any time.

We all are different colors
We all have different lives
We all speak different languages
We all have to pay our dues, but under it
all, all of us are Jews.
We all have different situations,
but we all hear when we cry,
and we will always be one people,
under a single sky.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE: Reports from our Kulanu correspondents on their visits to the Abayudaya in Uganda and the Bnei Menashe in Israel!

Deadline for next issue: July 15, 1995

Edited by Karen and Aron Prlmack

Kulanu
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